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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000212

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG AND AF/C  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU, DEPARTMENT FOR A/DAS WYCOFF

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS COMMITTED TO DIALOGUE, BUT TIME IS  
RUNNING OUT

REF: A. KHARTOUM 117  
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 118  
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 124  
[1](#)D. PARIS 223

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: From February 12-16, four Chadian rebels from the United Resistance Front (UFR) separately told poloffs that they are currently committed to political dialogue, but cautioned that time is running out as they wait for deeper diplomatic engagement from the European Union and United States. Having selected a leader in Timane Erdimi, the UFR now is putting the final touches on its political structure, stated contacts. In a letter addressed to AF Acting DAS Karl Wycoff, rebels requested a visit to Washington to explain their position (see full text in para 11). Meanwhile, a UNAMID political affairs officer reported on February 15 increased Chadian rebel military activities in West Darfur in the last week, including at least four supply flights to El-Geneina, one reconnaissance mission into Chad, and the re-organization of rebel camps. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) In four separate meetings throughout Khartoum from February 12-16, poloffs met the following UFR representatives:  
- Houle Djonga Djonkamala, UFCD Foreign Relations secretary and confidante of UFR Vice President Adouma Hassaballah  
- Mahamat Hanno, RFC and close associate of UFR President Timane Erdimi  
- Muktar ben Yaya, UFDD Foreign Relations secretary, and point person for UFR First Vice President Abdul Wahid Aboud  
- Al Badour Acyl, UFR Foreign Affairs Officer

COMMITTED TO DIALOGUE AND A POLITICAL SOLUTION FOR NOW. . .

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[1](#)3. (C) All contacts reported that UFR is pursuing diplomatic engagement and a negotiated political settlement with the Government of Chad. However, UFR does not have any direct dialogue with President Deby or the Government of Chad (GoC) and, according to ben Yaya and others, UFR leaders believe that any dialogue with the GOC must be accompanied by international observers and/or mediation from the EU, the U.S., or the UN. Although the GoS has not intervened in UFR's work, said Hanno and Djonkamala, Sudanese officials have told the Chadian rebels that they should pursue political dialogue at this stage. Prominent Chadians, including former Prime Minister Fidel Moungar, have also traveled to Khartoum within the last week to plead with Erdimi about the need for a political solution, reported Djonkamala. As part of their political outreach, UFR representatives told poloffs that they would like to send delegations to the U.S. and Europe, and inquired about whether and when this might be possible. Poloff did not offer a response to these contacts, but promised to pass on

the request to Washington. (See action request in para 10, and full text of letter in para 11. Letter will also be scanned and sent to AF/C and AF/SPG)

14. (C) UFR continues its efforts to strengthen its political foundation, stated all contacts. Within the last week, UFR established the High Resistance Council, and divided its 121 seats among the rebel groups as follows: UFDD/F 20 seats; UFDD 25 seats; UFCD 27 seats; RFC 15 seats; FPRN 12 seats; CDR 12 seats; other groups, including former associates of FSR Soubiane 10 seats.

"BUT TIME IS RUNNING OUT AS WE WAIT FOR THE EU AND THE U.S."

15. (C) Some individuals within UFR are less optimistic about a diplomatic breakthrough with the GOC. Muktar ben Yaya stated that although the movement will follow Erdimi's decisions, that some personalities are pushing Erdimi to stage an attack now. Admitting that he is one of the individuals anxious for an attack, Yaya stated "We've waited for too long for something from you and I am not optimistic about our political options at this point." When asked about the viability of participating in the August 13 and Sirte accords, all UFR contacts were uniformly dismissive and said that the lack of international involvement, the noticeable lack of implementation, and Deby's intentional targeting of his political opponents are all proof of the failure of these agreements. In a second meeting with Mahamat Hanno on February 16, Hanno opened the meeting suggesting an impending UFR military attack saying, "You watch and see what comes tomorrow and then you'll want to talk to us." Poloff asked for further clarification regarding this statement, to which

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Hanno responded, "We are committed to dialogue, but that does mean that we will not pursue military options - even since we chose our leader, two options have always been on the table."

Al Badour Acyl, a Foreign Affairs officer for UFR accompanying Hanno, added, "We are not going to set a deadline before our attacks - we are ready and will do so as soon as possible."

CHD CONTINUES TO PUSH FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN EU AND REBELS

16. (S) Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's Theo Murphy (protect) told poloff on February 13 that, although the European Union, continues its unofficial interaction with the Chadian rebels (with CHD as an intermediary passing messages,) that the EU has moved painfully slow and that the initiative is currently on hold. Murphy stated that the EU official charged with the initiative is on vacation until the end of February and that the EU will not move forward until his return. Murphy stated that CHD has also proposed hosting a meeting for the Chadian rebels and the European Union in Geneva, and inquired whether U.S. officials would be interested in participating in this discrete meeting. (Note:

CHD's initiative with the EU is both discrete and still in its infancy and should not be discussed outside of the USG. End Note.) All rebel contacts stated that while pursuing diplomatic engagement with the EU, they are not optimistic that this dialogue will yield results. Reflecting on the possibility of mediation at this stage, Djonkamala said there is "nothing tangible" with the EU, the "AU was born dead," and "nothing is coming from you," so our options are limited. Hanno and Acyl both stated that the French dominate the EU and will never allow the EU to strongly encourage Deby to talk to the rebels. (Note: On February 16, French political officer Othman El Kachtoul told poloffs that the French Embassy in Khartoum does maintain low-level contact with the Chadian rebel leadership, but did not mention the possibility of EU engagement with the Chadians. End Note.)

UNAMID OBSERVES INCREASED MILITARY PREPARATION

17. (C) On February 15, UNAMID political affairs officer Hideo Ikebe told poloff that UNAMID has observed increased

Chadian rebel military preparation over the last week. Ikebe, having just returned from a week-long field visit to El-Geneina, said that he personally observed four SAF airplanes deliver supplies to the Chadian rebels. Ikebe also reported that he witnessed large numbers of rebels loading up on "excessive amounts" of food, water, and fuel in El-Geneina. In addition to increased supply activity, Ikebe reported that the Chadian rebels conducted several reconnaissance missions the week of February 8 into Chad "probably to test the GOC forces." (Note: On February 13, Egyptian poloff Tamer Azzam also reported that their Embassy had received many reports of increased Chadian rebel movements across the Sudanese-Chadian border. End Note.) Ikebe also reported that the Chadian rebels have reorganized their camps in West Darfur. Previously, the rebel camps were divided along factional lines, but remained in relative close proximity to one another north and south of Geneina. Ikebe stated that now UFR military command established three new camps of mixed rebel groups in Sawani (30 km north of Geneina,) Tenderti (40 km north of Geneina) and Alumakul (close to the Chadian border.) (Note: All spellings phonetic. End Note.)

OTHER NEWS: SOUBIANE, REPORTED DEFECTIONS, AND DOHA

18. (C) UFR contacts reported that two of Ahmat Soubiane's senior leaders, Captain Ismail Abd Al-Rahman and Ali Gaday, recently joined UFR. All contacts stated that these defections indicate that Soubiane has lost influence on the ground. They also reported that Soubiane may ultimately join UFR, but that even if he does, the impact will be minimal on the already strong UFR. All UFR contacts admitted that a small number of UFDD fighters did defect to the GOC the week of February 8. However, the UFR representatives stated that the number of defectors was between 20-30 men, and much lower than the 52 reported on Chadian National Radio. According to these three contacts, before the media reported the story, GOC officials added GOC troops posing as rebels and GOC vehicles painted in rebel colors into group of defectors to make their numbers appear much larger. UFR contacts were uniformly pessimistic about Doha, and stated that even if JEM and the GOS agree on a proposal, that it will not impact their relationship with the Sudanese Government or their struggle in Chad.

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COMMENT

19. (C) Although rebel groups' former rebel and tribal affiliations still exist, the Chadian rebels have shown remarkable deference to their new leader and hierarchy, a unified public message, and now an integrated military force. The rebels did not specifically set a deadline or discuss a detailed time frame for their military options. Almost all of them reported, however, that they and their leadership would remain in Khartoum at least another two weeks, and it is unlikely that a full scale attack will occur while the leadership remain in the Sudanese capital. While reassuring, this time should not be wasted, as it presents an opportunity for diplomatic engagement. Even limited and discrete communication, possibly coupled with a meeting with rebel representatives outside the region, could delay a UFR attack and prevent even more bloodshed in troubled Eastern Chad. Facilitation/encouragement of a meeting between a delegation from Deby's government and the rebels would further delay a UFR attack. Obviously, there is a danger that any such meeting would be played up by UFR as some sort of endorsement from Washington. The Doha talks between JEM and the Sudanese Government seem to put UFR even more in the spotlight: if Khartoum supports an imminent offensive, it will wreck any incipient rapprochement with JEM. If their relationship with JEM is paramount, then the rebels will be left without a patron and Khartoum loses a powerful tool to destabilize its Western neighbor. Only some sort of political process between Deby and his rebels, could allow Khartoum to extract itself

unscathed from the dilemma of contradictory commitments.

ACTION REQUEST

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¶10. (C) Post requests guidance regarding the UFR's desire to send a delegation to Washington.

¶11. (SBU) Begin text:

Union Des Forces  
De La Resistance (UFR)  
Unite - Paix - Justice

Le 14/02/2009

A son Excellence Karl Wycoff  
Director, Central Africa Office

Excellence,

Convaincu par la volonte de votre nouvelle administration de privilegier le dialogue comme voie de resolution des conflits dans le monde, ainsi que sa determination pour la cause de la paix, de la democratie et du developpement, nous avons decide de vous adresser cette correspondance.

L'Union des Forces de la Resistance (UFR) au nom de laquelle nous vous contactons est la principale organisation politico-militaire nee de la volonte d'union de tous les mouvements qui operant a l'Est du Tchad contre le regime D'Idriss Deby.

Compte tenu de l'approche de votre nouvelle administration et tenant compte des relations historiques et les interets reciproques des nos deux peuples (Americain et Tchadien), nous ne pouvons qu'etre demandeur du soutien de votre pays a toute initiative tendant vers un dialogue inclusif sincere au detriment de la guerre au Tchad.

Aussi, voudrions-nous saisir la presente opportunit e pour demander des recontres selon votre convenance avec les membres de votre administration centrale afin d'une part, echanger de vive voix nos lectures de la situation actuelle au Tchad, et d'autre part, exposer nos solutions politiques aux conflits qui concernent directement ou indirectement le Tchad.

En vous souhaitant bonne reception, nous vous prions de croire Excellence Monsieur la Directeur, a l'assurance de notre consideration distinguee.

Le President de l'UFR

Timan Erdimi  
FERNANDEZ